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- (c) Agreements.
- (d) Applicability.
- (e) Effect on FCC authority.

SUBCHAPTER III—RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND DEMONSTRATION

- 5631. Continued Federal research and development.
 - (a) Roles of NASA and Department of Defense.
 - (b) Roles of Department of Agriculture and Department of the Interior.
 - (c) Role of other Federal agencies.
- 5632. Availability of federally gathered unenhanced data.
 - (a) General rule.
 - (b) Protection for commercial data distributor.
- 5633. Technology demonstration program.
 - (a) Establishment.
 - (b) Execution of program.
 - (c) Broad application.
 - (d) Private sector funding.
 - (e) Landsat Program Management coordination.
 - (f) Report to Congress.

SUBCHAPTER IV—ASSESSING OPTIONS FOR SUCCESSOR LAND REMOTE SENSING SYSTEM

- 5641. Assessing options for successor land remote sensing system.
 - (a) Assessment.
 - (b) Goals.
 - (c) Preference for private sector system.

SUBCHAPTER V—GENERAL PROVISIONS

- 5651. Nondiscriminatory data availability.
 - (a) General rule.
 - (b) Exceptions.
- 5652. Archiving of data.
 - (a) Public interest.
 - (b) Archiving practices.
 - (c) Determination of content of basic data set.
 - (d) Public domain.
- 5653. Nonreproduction.
- 5654. Reimbursement for assistance.
- 5655. Acquisition of equipment.
- 5656. Radio frequency allocation.
 - (a) Application to Federal Communications Commission.
 - (b) Deadline for FCC action.
 - (c) Development and construction of United States systems.
 - (d) Consistency with international obligations and public interest.
- 5657. Consultation.
 - (a) Consultation with Secretary of Defense.
 - (b) Consultation with Secretary of State.
 - (c) Status report.
 - (d) Reimbursements.
- 5658. Enforcement.
 - (a) In general.
 - (b) Authority of Secretary.
 - (c) Enforcement mechanisms.
 - (d) Procedures and regulations.

SUBCHAPTER VI—PROHIBITION OF COMMERCIALIZATION OF WEATHER SATELLITES

- 5671. Prohibition.
- 5672. Future considerations.

CHAPTER REFERRED TO IN OTHER SECTIONS

This chapter is referred to in title 49 section 70117.

§ 5601. Findings

The Congress finds and declares the following:

- (1) The continuous collection and utilization of land remote sensing data from space are of

major benefit in studying and understanding human impacts on the global environment, in managing the Earth's natural resources, in carrying out national security functions, and in planning and conducting many other activities of scientific, economic, and social importance.

(2) The Federal Government's Landsat system established the United States as the world leader in land remote sensing technology.

(3) The national interest of the United States lies in maintaining international leadership in satellite land remote sensing and in broadly promoting the beneficial use of remote sensing data.

(4) The cost of Landsat data has impeded the use of such data for scientific purposes, such as for global environmental change research, as well as for other public sector applications.

(5) Given the importance of the Landsat program to the United States, urgent actions, including expedited procurement procedures, are required to ensure data continuity.

(6) Full commercialization of the Landsat program cannot be achieved within the foreseeable future, and thus should not serve as the near-term goal of national policy on land remote sensing; however, commercialization of land remote sensing should remain a long-term goal of United States policy.

(7) Despite the success and importance of the Landsat system, funding and organizational uncertainties over the past several years have placed its future in doubt and have jeopardized United States leadership in land remote sensing.

(8) Recognizing the importance of the Landsat program in helping to meet national and commercial objectives, the President approved, on February 11, 1992, a National Space Policy Directive which was developed by the National Space Council and commits the United States to ensuring the continuity of Landsat coverage into the 21st century.

(9) Because Landsat data are particularly important for national security purposes and global environmental change research, management responsibilities for the program should be transferred from the Department of Commerce to an integrated program management involving the Department of Defense and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

(10) Regardless of management responsibilities for the Landsat program, the Nation's broad civilian, national security, commercial, and foreign policy interests in remote sensing will best be served by ensuring that Landsat remains an unclassified program that operates according to the principles of open skies and nondiscriminatory access.

(11) Technological advances aimed at reducing the size and weight of satellite systems hold the potential for dramatic reductions in the cost, and substantial improvements in the capabilities, of future land remote sensing systems, but such technological advances have not been demonstrated for land remote sensing and therefore cannot be relied upon as the sole means of achieving data continuity for the Landsat program.